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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No.	T2180-906495
First Inventor or Application Identifier	Mark BENSON
Title	Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System
Express Mail Label No.	

jc760 U.S. PTO 08/25/00

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Box Patent Application, Washington, DC 20231

09/645928 JC542 U.S. PTO 08/25/00

1. [ ] * Fee Transmittal Form *(e.g., PTO/SB/17)* *(Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)*
2. [x] Specification [Total Pages 25] *(preferred arrangement set forth below)*
   - Descriptive title of the Invention
   - Cross References to Related Applications
   - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
   - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
   - Background of the Invention
   - Brief Summary of the Invention
   - Brief Description of the Drawings *(if filed)*
   - Detailed Description
   - Claim(s)
   - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. [x] Drawing(s) *(35 U.S.C. 113)* [Total Sheets 8]
4. Oath or Declaration [Total Pages 33]
   a. [ ] Newly executed (original or copy)
   b. [ ] Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d)) *(for continuation/divisional with Box 16 completed)*
      i. [ ] DELETION OF INVENTOR(S) Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 13: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.27), EXCEPT IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.28).

5. [ ] Microfiche Computer Program *(Appendix)*
6. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission *(if applicable, all necessary)*
   a. [ ] Computer Readable Copy
   b. [ ] Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
   c. [ ] Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

7. [ ] Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
8. [ ] 37 C.F.R.§3.73(b) Statement *(when there is an assignee)* [ ] Power of Attorney
9. [ ] English Translation Document *(if applicable)*
10. [ ] Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 [ ] Copies of IDS Citations
11. [xx] Preliminary Amendment
12. [xx] Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) *(Should be specifically itemized)*
13. [ ] * Small Entity Statement(s) *(PTO/SB/09-12)* [ ] Statement filed in prior application, Status still proper and desired
14. [ ] Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) *(if foreign priority is claimed)*
15. [xx] Other: Corr. Add. Notice of Filing ~~Without Declaration~~

16. **If a CONTINUING APPLICATION,** *check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment:*

[ ] Continuation [ ] Divisional [ ] Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No: _____/_____

Prior application information: Examiner _____ *Group / Art Unit:* _____

For CONTINUATION or DIVISIONAL APPS only: The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which an oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered a part of the disclosure of the accompanying continuation or divisional application and is hereby incorporated by reference. The incorporation can only be relied upon when a portion has been inadvertently omitted from the submitted application parts.

17. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

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Docket: T2180-906495

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of	
Mark BENSON	Group Art Unit:
Serial No.:	Examiner:
Filed: August 25, 2000	
For: Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System	

McLean, Virginia
August 25, 2000

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

This Preliminary Amendment is filed contemporaneously with the filing of the above-identified non-provisional patent application. Please amend the application as indicated below.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

At page 1, after the title of the invention, please insert the following:

--This application discloses subject matter disclosed in, and claims the benefit of the filing date of, U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/151,042, filed August 27, 1999.--

REMARKS

Favorable consideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

The change made herein is to make a cross-reference to the related provisional application, for the purposes of obtaining the benefit of the earlier filing date of that application.

Respectfully,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

By: _____
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Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System

Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to a computerized method and system for controlling renewal specifications and authorizing renewal policies for renewal of insurance coverage. More particularly, the invention relates to a unique business method incorporating the advantages of endowing a remote field agent with sole discretion to legally bind an insurance carrier to a renewal insurance policy contract. This invention incorporates the advantages of transmission of renewal policy data over a global network, such as, for example, the Internet. Data is transmitted between a central server and a remote terminal staffed by the field agent, using a process such that the field agent can independently, and without employing traditional underwriting procedures, control pricing flexibility, billing plan and timing of both quotation and policy issuance, and locally authorize an offer for proposed insurance coverage and associated premium, in a response timeframe that is unattainable using known, traditional industry methods.

Description of Related Art

Commercial activities, of which insurance underwriting is one example, have been shown to be enhanced by taking advantage of the speed and flexibility offered by electronically interconnecting various business operations. The Internet is a worldwide system of inter-connected computer networks. The Internet backbone enables computers of all kinds to share services and to communicate directly, as if they were part of one giant seamless global computing machine. The Internet is currently configured to join together large commercial communications services as well as thousands of university, government and corporate computer networks and other computers. Communications over the Internet is accomplished by defined communication protocols.

One particular aspect of the Internet which has gained widespread use is the World-Wide Web ("the Web"). The World-Wide Web is a subset of the Internet, which uses a specific protocol to permit communication between sites. Such communication between a computer at one site, and a computer at another site, may be interactive and is referred to as on-line. The Web is a collection of specially formatted Web documents, or pages, located on numerous computers around the world that are logically connected by the Internet. Web documents are commonly written in HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language).

The computers storing the Web pages are called servers and are configured to transfer a copy of a stored Web page to a user's computer, by way of a host server to which the user's computer is connected. For example, a commercial insurance company might establish a series of Web pages on a server, so that remote personnel can view copies of them on their local computers. The Web server can either be directly operated by the insurance company, or Web server services can be contracted by the insurance company from a supplier. Either way, an entity that provides a Web page is called a "content provider", and typically, a content provider, such as an insurance company, provides a series of Web pages, each providing information and enabling the user to key-in questions about the information, and then receive answers on subsequent Web pages, or answer questions posed by a Web page and receive subsequent Web pages based on the supplied answers. Whether one Web page directs the user to one or more other Web pages, depends on how the Web page content provider has arranged the software underlying and supporting the Web page.

The HTML format is a scripting language which is used to generate the Web pages for different content providers. In this setting, a content provider is an individual or company that places information (content) on the Internet so that it can be accessed by field agents. As is well known in the art, the HTML format is a set of conventions for marking different portions of a document so that each portion appears in a distinctive format. For example,

the HTML format identifies or "tags" portions of a document to identify different categories of text (e.g., the title, header, body text, etc.).

A user, such as an insurance field agent, accesses the Internet using a personal computer equipped with a conventional modem or equivalent network connection device. Commercially available Web interface software called a "browser" is installed in the personal computer so that when the field agent wishes to access the Internet, an attached modem is automatically instructed to connect over telephone lines with the server of a local Internet Web service provider. The Internet Web server typically is accessed through a local telephone number, to avoid long distance telephone charges, and acts as a "post office" through which the field agent's requests for Web pages are forwarded, and through which requested Web pages are received and then passed to the user's personal computer. The user can then access information at any address accessible over the Internet. Two well-known Web browsers, for example, are the Netscape Navigator developed by Netscape, Inc. and the Microsoft Internet Explorer developed by Microsoft Corporation. These interfaces are highly graphic in nature, emphasizing a blend of pictures and stylistics intended to enhance the user's rapid understanding of the Web page content. Usually, selectable options chosen with a "click" of a mouse are available, as well as input boxes in which text, such as answers to questions posed by the Web page, can be typed.

In order to view Web pages originating from a particular content provider, such as an insurance company Web server, the field agent instructs the Web interface software, i.e., the browser, resident in the field agent's personal computer, to locate the server on which the insurance company's Web pages are stored, and to initiate transfer of an HTML-formatted Web page over the Internet to the user's Web interface software, which reads the embedded tags in the document so that the document appears formatted in a specified manner.

In practice, the field agent simply enters a "domain name", i.e., a name which is unique to the insurance company's Web server, and is relatively easy to remember, which the Web interface software converts to a unique Internet "address" of the insurance company's Web server. From that point on, the communication process occurs automatically between the field agent-connected local Web server and the insurance company-connected Web server, resulting in retrieval of the Web page from the insurance company's Web server and subsequent display on the field agent's personal computer. No connection between the field agent's computer and the insurance company's server is maintained after the Web page is provided to the user's computer. The Web page simply remains visible on the field agent's personal computer. At the direction of the field agent, typically with one key-stroke or mouse-click, the user's Web browser software re-initiates connections between the computers for each subsequent request for another Web page, or submission of the field agent's input. Importantly, the field agent can key-in input to a Web page, for example, in response to questions posed on the Web page received from an insurance company Web server, and upon keying in a "send" keystroke or mouse-click, that information will be transmitted back to the insurance company Web server, for subsequent processing.

The procedure traditionally employed by insurance companies for insurance policy renewal typically does not involve use of the Internet. Instead, a docketing reminder system is employed. At some predetermined period prior to the expiration data of a policy (usually 60-90-129 days), some type of pre-renewal letter is sent from the insurance carrier to their agency. This letter requests information including updated payrolls and other pertinent underwriting information that is needed by the insurance carrier in order to underwrite, i.e., accept or reject, and rate the renewal of the policy. The agency collects and completes this information by some set date, which usually is prior to the renewal data, and returns the information to the insurance carrier. The insurance carrier reviews the returned information, at which time it makes a decision to accept or reject coverage. If accepted, the

carrier provides the agency with a quotation and/or renewal policy. If quoted prior to issuance, the agency must notify the carrier of its intent to accept, or bind, or lock in the quote. Once bound, i.e., upon acceptance of the quote, a policy is issued by the carrier. As is well known in the industry, this process may take weeks or months, depending on service levels provided by the agency and insurance carrier, and may extend well into the new policy period.

An alternative traditional insurance company procedure is one in which the insurance carrier establishes some type of automatic renewal of the policy, whereby an existing policy is put up against a preset underwriting and pricing template. If the policy fits, payrolls are automatically adjusted by a preset amount (5%, 10%, etc.) and a quotation and/or policy is automatically sent to the agent at a specific set time, i.e., 15/30 days prior to the effective date. along with a predetermined billing plan. In this case, any necessary adjustment to payrolls or adjustments to pricing are negotiated between the carrier and agent, usually by endorsement to the renewal process. While this procedure is somewhat streamlined and speeds up the overall process of renewal, in comparison with the aforementioned procedure, nevertheless, considerable time transpires before the procedure, including the endorsement procedure, is complete.

Insurance underwriting has been conducted through the use of computerized automation in many phases of the insurance business, but until recently, such automation has included only limited use of the Internet. An example of such use is end-user advertisements, questionnaires and presentation of information. However, the improved flexibility and rapid response accompanying the use of Internet connectivity in commercial arenas makes possible new business paradigms heretofore not possible.

One such new business opportunity is in connection with the internal operations of an insurance company that processes high volumes of insurance policies of a type having profit margins that are exceptionally sensitive to operating costs, for example, renewal of workman's compensation

insurance policies. It has been found that despite excellence in all pertinent business areas, and especially in cost management, profit margins obtainable after accounting for operating costs, are relatively small for this type of policy renewal business, as compared with other aspects of the insurance business. Future viability in such a business under current market trends has been shown to increasingly depend on cost containment in the face of processing high volumes of policies.

An example of this requirement is exemplified by the specific business of obtaining renewal of insurance policies, and in particular, renewal of workman's compensation policies. What is needed is a system and method for achieving cost savings that are substantially greater than attainable from achieving efficiencies through application of known computer and network techniques. Instead of such traditional data processing solutions alone, a combination of a new business paradigm coupled with computing and network techniques is needed to achieve viability in a margin-sensitive insurance business.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a system that eliminates a substantial number of steps in a traditional policy renewal process and enables shifting responsibility for authorizing acceptance of the terms and conditions of a proposed renewal policy and binding of the insurance carrier, from a central authority to field agents geographically remote from the carrier.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a system that enables a field agent geographically remote from a carrier to evaluate an insurance policy subscriber's policy attributes and independently determine on the spot that the subscriber attributes are such that the insurance carrier is legally bound to the terms and conditions of the policy under the authority of its field agent.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a system that enables the field agent to control renewal specification, timing, quotation, pricing, billing and quotation/policy issuance.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a system that drives policy approval response time downward from industry norms of days and months to not more than five minutes.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a system that achieves competitive policy pricing directly as a reflection of the overall reduced cost of operations due to the absence of routing every policy renewal decision through a traditional underwriting and rating process, before authorization to bind the insurance carrier is achieved.

Another object of the invention is to provide a system that utilizes the Internet and associated Web pages as a "user-friendly" interactive communications vehicle between a central data source and disparate field agents.

Another object of the invention is to provide a system that is applicable to a broad range of instances requiring remote, but rapid action effected by remote agents making authorization decisions without the necessity of first securing prior approval.

Summary of the Invention

In accordance with the present invention, a policy renewal system is provided for generating policy data associated with eligible renewal policies on a periodic basis, transmitting the policy data relating to a given policy subscriber over a data network to the data memory of a remote computer, enabling a field agent operating the remote computer to update the policy data, as necessary, in light of any new information gained about the policy subscriber, and enabling the field agent to legally bind an insurance carrier to a resulting policy reflecting the evaluated policy data, where the binding step

is accomplished independently by the field agent without prior underwriting analysis or authorization by the insurance carrier.

The present invention combines a unique business model incorporating the advantages of endowing a remote field agent with sole discretion to legally bind an insurance carrier to a renewal insurance policy contract, with the advantages of transmission of renewal policy data over the Internet between a central server and a remote terminal staffed by the field agent. This approach operates completely opposite to, and in stark contrast with, traditional insurance business models. Traditional insurance business models require that all policies, whether new policies or renewal policies, cycle through an underwriting and rating process employing staffing and resources, with attendant operating costs and often substantial delay. The cost and relatively sluggish response times of such traditional policy writing paradigms are the primary factors affecting the competitive policy renewal business. Therefore, in the case of the renewal policy business, substantial moderation of these factors is achieved by completely eliminating the underwriting process cycle associated with binding each, individual, renewal policy. This is accomplished first, by identifying policies eligible for renewal, second, by applying a business process in which each field agent independently, and without employing traditional underwriting resources, evaluates the identified renewal policy data and independently binds an insurance carrier to the terms and conditions of the policy. Third, the timing advantages obtained by eliminating underwriting procedures are capitalized on, and even further improved upon, through efficiencies gained through use of workload and information distribution over the Internet between a central policy data storage means and geographically separated field agents.

In order to achieve a reduction in renewal policy process timing to a few minutes, as compared to traditional methods requiring days, weeks and sometimes months, the field agent must be in electronic communication with the source of the renewal policy data, which typically is a data processing system managed by the insurance carrier, or an organization supporting the

insurance carrier, so that policy renewal transactions can be readily initiated and completed in not more than five minutes or less, including interview of the policy subscriber, input of updated data, and output of a revised policy in a form suitable for legal binding. At no time in the insurance industry, has such a response time been routinely achieved. This procedure must be unaffected by variability in the training level of the field agent and substantial numbers of eligible policies simultaneously being renewed.

Implicit to the process of the present invention, is the shift of authorization responsibility away from a central authority, such as a "home office", where resources possessing adequate levels of expertise and judgment review and determine approval of the terms of each individual policy in light of the policy subscriber's attributes, i.e., an underwriting and rating procedure, and toward the field agent. Without such risk-management resources in place, the insurance carrier is potentially subject to increased risk of being bound to a policy having less than satisfactory terms and conditions. In the aggregate, a carrier bound to numerous policies having terms and conditions adverse to the interests of the carrier potentially would be subject to substantial costs. On the other hand, where a carefully selected group of risk-assessment factors are included in underwriting the original, new policy, and are included for review and update by the agent, as part of the policy renewal procedure, the resulting exposure to increased risk is minimized. The fact that the renewal business relates to existing policy subscribers improves the odds, because an insurance-history has been developed by the carrier. The risk-assessment factors, optionally in the form of questions, can be included in an Internet Web page for inspection and update by the field agent. In addition, rapidity of response presents additional marketing benefits, as does competitive pricing reflecting the overall reduced cost of operations due to the absence of routing every policy renewal decision back through a home office approval process to achieve authorization to bind.

The method and system according to the present invention further includes an renewal policy eligibility generator, which applies a set of criteria

to data corresponding to a group of policies, to determine a subset group of policies that are eligible for renewal. Identification of those policies eligible for renewal is then made available, for example, by being included in an Internet Web page, to respective field agents for further processing.

The policy renewal method according to the present invention is applicable to a broad range of applications requiring rapid action effected by remote agents making authorization decisions without first securing prior approval, and is not limited to insurance policies, renewal policies, or contracts.

The system and method of the present invention utilizes a network, such as the Internet, over which renewal policy data is transmitted in the form of Web pages. An eligible renewal policy generator is arranged to generate policy data corresponding to any renewal policy eligible for renewal within some desired time period. All such data is arranged by field agent and made available in the form of a Web page, one page per policy, for example, although other arrangements are envisioned.

The nature of the policy data is twofold. In the case of workman's compensation insurance coverage, the policy data includes information previously on file relating to the policy subscriber, such as number of employees and the insurance class of work to be performed. The policy data also includes a set of questions tied to the particular classification of work, wherein the questions provide a venue for updating the existing policy data. Any field agent, by operating commercially available Internet browser software on a personal computer connected to the Internet, can access Web pages associated with the agent, through use of a suitable security arrangement, such as a password. Optionally, other information important to the agent's work is also available in Web page form.

The field agent cycles through the Web pages associated with a given renewal policy, inputting updated or new information as necessary and

transmitting each Web page back to the central policy data storage location. The submitted data is screened by the inventive system for input errors and completeness and general acceptability. During this procedure, the agent answers any necessary update-questions associated with the class of work for which insurance coverage is to be provided, until a Web page is received indicating that the renewal policy is in condition to be bound. At this point, the agent has the option of saving the data for future access and suspending further action to another time, and also has the option of printing the policy data, and optionally other information. In the alternative, the agent can input an indication on the Web page that the insurance carrier is to be legally bound to the terms and conditions of a renewal policy represented by the input policy data. Transmission of the Web page to the central policy data storage location binds the insurance carrier and will cause the system to respond with a Web page indicating that the carrier is so bound. A representation of the renewal policy is transmitted to the agent in the form of one or more separate Web pages, which can be printed.

The system according to the present invention is configured and arranged so that the total time required between initial receipt of the policy data and producing a printed copy of a bound policy is not more than five minutes or less. If the agent fails to follow the renewal update procedure, the system of the present invention automatically triggers a policy, based on preset timing, billing plan and underwriting defaults.

In the alternative, upon receipt of policy data, the field agent operates independently by completing the above-described procedures obtained from a locally stored program, in order to achieve a bound renewal policy.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a simplified block diagram of the Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System, according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a simplified block diagram of the system of Fig. 1, showing the interconnection between computer and network components, according to the present invention;

Fig. 3 illustrates an example of graphic "buttons" arranged at the top or bottom of various Web pages according to the present invention;

Fig. 4 illustrates an example policy information search request Web page according to the present invention;

Fig. 5 illustrates an example policy renewal input Web page obtainable by selecting the "Renewal Quotes" button 312 according to the present invention;

Fig. 6 illustrates an example policy renewal input Web page including questions pertinent to the previously entered governing class code according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 illustrates an example policy renewal response Web page including policy information relating to the policy subscriber data input via prior Renewal input screens according to the present invention;

Fig. 8 illustrates an example policy renewal input Web page including additional questions relating to the policy subscriber's attributes according to the present invention;

Fig. 9 illustrates an example of a bind renewal input Web page including pertinent data, associated premiums, and entry button for binding the insurance carrier to the terms and conditions of the policy, according to the present invention;

Fig. 10 illustrates an example of a confirmation Web page 380 according to the present invention.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

As shown in Fig. 1, a system 10 consistent with the present invention provides for the processing of insurance policy data over local area networks, dedicated data lines, cellular, personal communication systems (PCS), microwave, satellite networks, the Internet, through dial up access, satellite

uplink or any other network using an open communications protocol, such as TCP/IP, or any other suitable form of data communications. Some of the computing elements of the system preferably connect to each other via a public switched telephone network. Subscriber attributes 310 and, eligibility questions 312, described below, travel through these connections. Other corporate information, such as latest revision forms, business data, business news, personnel information, and the like, may also be communicated through these connections.

System 10 includes an insurance company Web server 12, at least one field agent computer 14, which preferably is a personal computer, and an insurance company computer 16. Computer 16 can be one or more large transaction processor computers. In accordance with the invention, the system integrates the operation of the insurance company Web server 12, the agent computers 14, and the insurance company computer 16, so that insurance policies eligible for renewal are identified and arranged to be automatically forwarded to the field agent for action. In the preferred embodiment, the insurance company Web server 12 manages a common connection via the Internet between insurance company information systems operations, which include insurance company computer 16, and geographically remote field agent computers 14. Field agent computers 14 may also be subscriber computers, where a subscriber is, or employs, the insured. The insurance company computer 16 may be replaced by, or operatively connect with, third party computers, which provide other functions such as claims processing and review of prior authorization requests. The insurance company computer 16 and the third party computer and the insurance company Web server 12 preferably are capable of communicating on, and are interconnected by, an insurance company local area network (LAN) 20 or other suitable data link.

Computers 12, 14, and 16 are integrated for the performance of at least three main functions: (1) storage of policy information and identification of policies eligible for renewal; (2) organization of eligible renewal policy

information by field agent, transmission of renewal policy information to each field agent and receipt of field agent input; and (3) enabling a field agent to independently process a renewal policy, evaluate subscriber input and approve a renewal policy for binding, effect contractual binding of the insurance company, and transmit information relative to a bound policy to the insurance company home office. The field agent communicates with the insurance company home office through Web screens made available on the field agent computer by Web browser software. These functions, described below, are depicted in Figs. 3-10, respectively.

The field agent computers 14 preferably are WINDOWS-compliant personal computers operating WINDOWS 3.x, or later release software, capable of communicating on, and are interconnected by, the Internet 22 or dial up access over a public switched telephone network. Web browser software 24 installed on the field agent computer 14 enables the field agent to easily connect with the Internet by way of a local Internet Web service provider, which runs software on a local Internet service provider Web server 18, arranged to pass requests for Web pages from the field agent over the Internet to the insurance company Web server 12, and to receive and then convey requested Web pages to the Web browser software 24 running on the agent's computer 14. The field agent uses a computer keyboard and computer mouse as an input device 26 to request Web pages, and to respond to their content. At the same time, other general public users 15 are also connected to the Internet service provider Web server, which simultaneously handles transactions initiated by them to other content providers unrelated to the insurance company. Each user is unaware of the activity of any other user. The insurance company or third party processor computers may alternatively be connected to the insurance company Web server 12 either by the Internet or a dial-up access arrangement.

As shown in Fig. 2, insurance company Web server 12 is preferably capable of high volume processing, performing a significant number of mathematical calculations in processing communications and database

searches. Insurance company Web server 12 may be a conventional personal computer or a computer workstation with sufficient memory and processing capability. The operating system of the insurance company Web server 12 may be DOS, WINDOWS 3.x, or later release, OS/2, AIX, or any other known and available operating system. Internet interface 210 supports a number of Internet access tools including, for example, an HTTP-compliant Web browser. The present invention is designed to operate within any of these known or developing Web browsers. Internet interface 210 may also support other Internet services including simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP) or e-mail, file transfer protocol (FTP), network news transfer protocol (NNTP) or "Usenet", and remote terminal access (Telnet).

Insurance company Web server 12 operates as a primary Web server, which operably includes server software 200 for both receiving and transmitting communications via Internet interface 210 and LAN interface 212. Insurance company Web server 12 preferably includes a Web server database 214, such as an Access, SQL, or other open database-compliant database, although any suitable database will suffice. Web server database 214 is operatively connected to Internet interface 210 and LAN interface 212, as well as to other processes, including a translator 216, a field agent activity processor 218 connected to a policy renewal criteria storage 219, a Web server database/subscriber database update processor 220, and optionally, a push-technology process 222. All processes within insurance company Web server 12 are operatively connected to a central processing unit 224, system utilities 225, temporary and permanent storage 226, and input/output devices 227 commonly found in commercially available servers, and in accordance with known practices.

Insurance company computer 16 can be any high volume, transaction processing computer in the present or future marketplace. Such computers are common to insurance company operations, and may be mainframe computers, or more typically a midrange computer such as IBM's AS/400. Primary databases used in such systems typically are in a predetermined

format, such as DB2, VSAM, ISAM, and are adaptable to any proprietary database by customizing a translator (not shown), which provides an interface between any proprietary database and the server's database.

Insurance company computer 16 includes a subscriber policy information system 228, which includes an eligible renewal policy extractor process 230 operatively connected to a subscriber database 232 and to a LAN interface 234. Subscriber database 232 includes data associated with a subscriber's current policy for a group of subscribers. Optionally, the insurance company includes multiple insurance providers for the group of policy subscribers. A subgroup of policy subscribers is identified as being associated with a particular field agent, although other groupings are possible.

In operation, the system of the present invention, on a monthly basis, for example, is arranged so that the eligible renewal policy extractor 230 generates a list of insurance policies that are eligible for renewal from the subscriber database 232. The eligible renewal policy extractor 230 applies a set of criteria arranged to determine which of a larger group of policies are eligible for renewal. Extractor 230 can be an expert system, for example, a rule-based system, and rules used by the expert system preferably are subject to update and modification. Data representing eligible renewal policies is transferred via LAN interface 234 from the insurance computer 16, over LAN 20, through LAN interface 212 of insurance company Web server 12, to a Web server database/subscriber database update processor 220. Update processor 220 updates the contents of Web server database 214, based on data generated by the eligible renewal policy extractor 230, and in a separate, reverse operation, updates the subscriber database 232, based on data generated by the field agent activity processor 218.

Field agent activity processor 218 manages data flow between Web server database 214 and each field agent. In the outbound direction, preferably field agent activity processor 218 accumulates all eligible renewal policy data associated with each field agent and, upon demand by a given

field agent, populates a Web page with eligible renewal policy data for which the requesting agent is responsible. Alternatively, field agent activity processor 218 populates, for all field agents, an individual Web page with all eligible renewal policy data associated with a given field agent, stores all Web pages, and makes each Web page available for transmission over the Internet to the corresponding field Agent, upon demand. In another embodiment, upon demand by a field agent, processor 218 accumulates the requisite eligible renewal policy data associated with that field agent, and populates a Web page on the fly. In still another alternative embodiment, upon demand by a field agent, all aforementioned processes are initiated on the fly, thereby obtaining a direct extraction from the subscriber database 232. Preferably, processor 218 formats the resulting Web page to be interpreted by an HTTP-compliant Web browser, or any comparable format appropriate for current Internet communications technology.

Optionally, a push technology transmitter 222 is arranged to communicate alternatively with companion push technology receiver software (not shown), or Web browser software, resident in each field agent's computer. Push technology transmitter 222, using any of the aforementioned processes, or similar processes, generates Web pages for each field agent and, using known push technology processes, automatically broadcasts the data to the field agent's computer without further human intervention, i.e., "pushes", the generated pages via Internet interface 210, over the Internet 22 to the field agent's computer 14.

Fig. 3 illustrates an example of graphic "buttons" arranged at the top or bottom of various screens, which preferably are Web pages. Other buttons are envisioned, and the exemplary embodiment is shown for descriptive purposes. The field agent mouse-clicks button 310 to initiate a "New Quote" process, which retrieves a Web page formatted for entry of policy data for a new policy subscriber. Button 311, "Edit New Quotes" returns to a "New Quote" screen if input has been suspended or interrupted. Button 312 is used to initiate a "Renewal Quotes" process, which retrieves a Web page formatted

for entry of renewal policy data for an existing policy subscriber. Buttons 313, "Change Password", 314, "Feedback", and 315, "Exit", enable the field agent to perform the indicated tasks.

Fig. 4 illustrates an example policy information search request Web page 320. The field agent enters one or more of policy number, account name, or other search options, in order to obtain desired policy information. A mouse-click on either button 322, "Submit", or button 324, "Exit", enables the agent to submit the Web page, as edited, or alternatively, to cancel the input, as well as the entire Web page. The system according to the present invention is arranged to transmit a replacement screen, depending on system parameters.

Fig. 5 illustrates an example policy renewal input Web page 330, which is obtainable by selecting the "Renewal Quotes" button 312. The policy renewal Web page includes one or more insurance class codes relevant to the policy subscriber, as well as, for example, payroll dollars. Drop-down windows further detailing class description, for example, are provided. Buttons 332, "Update Class Description" and 334, "Proceed" respectively, enable the field agent to update information on the Web page or proceed to the next Web page.

Fig. 6 illustrates an example policy renewal input Web page 340 including questions pertinent to the previously entered governing class code. Button 342, "Check Eligibility" enables the field agent to submit the information entered on the Web page.

Fig. 7 illustrates an example Renewal response Web page 350, including policy information relating to the policy subscriber data input via prior Renewal input Web pages. A "Next" button 352 enables the field agent to proceed to the next Web page.

Fig. 8 illustrates an example Renewal input Web page 360, which includes questions originally answered by the policy subscriber at the time the

subscriber originally applied for the policy. Web page 360 includes provision for updating answers to the questions. Button 362, "Do Not Accept" and button 364, "Accept" enable the field agent to stop the process, or proceed to the next step, respectively.

Fig. 9 illustrates an example of a final Renewal input Web page 370, which includes pertinent data and associated premiums. A "Print Quick Quote" button 372 is provided so that the agent is able to obtain a paper copy of the policy data, as amended. A "Bind" button 274 is also provided, with which the field agent clicks to legally bind the insurance carrier to the terms and conditions of the policy.

Fig. 10 illustrates an example of a Confirmation Web page 380, the receipt of which is the final step of the renewal policy procedure. Web page 380 represents the bound renewal policy, including all pertinent policy subscriber's attributes, as well as corresponding premium data. The agent is able to print a copy of the Confirmation Web page 380 through the normal personal computer print functions.

Claims:

1. A method for evaluating insurance policy data corresponding to a proposed renewal policy for binding an associated insurance carrier and renewing the policy under the authority of a field agent geographically remote from the carrier, comprising the steps of:

receiving a Web page from an insurance carrier including policy data corresponding to a renewal policy, said policy data being identified by an eligibility determining process of the carrier;

updating as necessary said policy data by inputting data corresponding to attributes of a subscriber on one or more Web pages by the field agent until receipt of a bind Web page indicating the proposed renewal policy for the subscriber is in condition such that the associated insurance carrier can be bound to the terms and conditions of the proposed renewal policy; and

binding said associated insurance carrier by the field agent by entering a bind indication on said bind Web page and transmitting said bind Web page to the carrier.

2. The method of claim 1 further including receiving one or more Bind Confirmation Web pages including acknowledgement that said associated insurance carrier has been bound to the terms and conditions of a renewal policy reflecting the bind Web page.

3. A method for renewing a policy to be bound by an insurance carrier comprising the steps of:

providing a field agent with policy data reflecting a policy eligible for renewal, wherein said policy data is identified by an eligibility determining process;

providing the field agent with predetermined questions selected so as to minimize financial risk to the policy carrier of being contractually bound to policy terms unfavorable to said policy carrier;

answering said predetermined questions by said field agent; and

binding an insurance carrier to the terms and conditions of a renewal policy reflecting said answers, wherein said binding is accomplished by a decision process undertaken by said field agent without including external underwriting and rating processes.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the steps of providing a field agent with policy data, providing the field agent with predetermined questions, answering said predetermined questions, and binding an insurance carrier, are accomplished by successive receipt, update, and transmission of a sequence of Web pages.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein said receipt and transmission of a sequence of Web pages occurs between a personal computer operated by the field agent and an insurance company Web server computer, wherein said personal computer and said Web server computer are interconnected by an connection.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the total time required between said step of providing a field agent with policy data and said step of binding an insurance carrier is not more than five minutes.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein said policy and said predetermined questions are unrelated to insurance and said insurance carrier is any company issuing said policy.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein said Web pages are information screens and said Internet connection is a data network connection.

9. The method of claim 5, wherein the field agent is one of said policy subscriber or an employer responsible for said policy subscriber.

10. A method for renewing a policy via Internet connections between a central data memory and a remote data memory, comprising the steps of:

generating in said remote data memory a first Web page including data identifying one or more eligible policies to be renewed, wherein said data has been previously identified by applying eligibility criteria to a data set representing a group of policies;

generating in said central data memory a request for policy data relating one of said one or more eligible renewal policies;

generating in the central data memory and transmitting over a network one or more second Web pages arranged to include said requested renewal policy data along with provision for inputting update data;

receiving, displaying, updating in said remote memory, and transmitting from said remote memory, said one or more second Web pages wherein said receiving, displaying, updating and transmitting is accomplished by the agent; and

binding the policy issuer to a policy associated with said renewal policy data, wherein said binding is accomplished by a decision process undertaken independently by said field agent without including external underwriting and risk assessment processes, and by transmitting to said central data memory a third Web page including a binding indication data.

11. The method of claim 10, prior to the step of binding the policy issuer, further comprising the step of:

transmitting update information relating to said policy to said central data memory over the network where said update information is screened to form a completeness and accuracy response; and

transmitting said completeness and accuracy response to said remote data memory; and

displaying said completeness and accuracy response as part of a Web page.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the total time required between said transmitting said policy data step and said binding the policy issuer step not more than five minutes.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the policy issuer is an insurance carrier and the policy is a renewal insurance contract having terms under which an insurance carrier issuing the policy is legally bound.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the field agent is one of said policy subscriber or an employer responsible for said policy subscriber.

15. A policy renewal system for renewing a policy comprising:

a network;

an eligible renewal policy generator for generating policy data for at least one renewal policy;

a remote data display configured for displaying said policy data in a form readable by a field agent; and

said policy generator and said remote data display connected to said network and configured to transmit said policy data over the network for display on said remote data display, wherein said field agent reading said displayed policy data evaluates said policy data and legally binds a policy

issuer to a renewal of said policy associated with said evaluated policy data, said binding accomplished independently by said field agent without underwriting analysis or risk analysis by the policy issuer.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the policy issuer is an insurance carrier, the policy is an insurance policy, the network is the Internet, and said policy data are data in the form of at least one Web page document.

Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System

Abstract

A new business model incorporating the advantages of endowing a remote field agent with sole discretion to legally bind an insurance carrier to a renewal insurance policy contract, is combined with the advantages of transmission of renewal policy data over the Internet between a central server and a remote terminal staffed by the field agent. Policy data associated with eligible renewal policies is generated according to specified criteria on a periodic basis. The policy data relating to a given policy subscriber is transmitted over the Internet in the form of Web pages to the data memory of a remote personal computer, where a field agent updates the policy data, as necessary, in light of any new information gained about the policy subscriber. The field agent legally binds an insurance carrier to a resulting renewal policy reflecting the evaluated policy data, where the binding step is accomplished by the field agent acting independently without prior underwriting analysis, rating, or authorization by the insurance carrier, and where the entire transaction is accomplished in not more than five minutes.

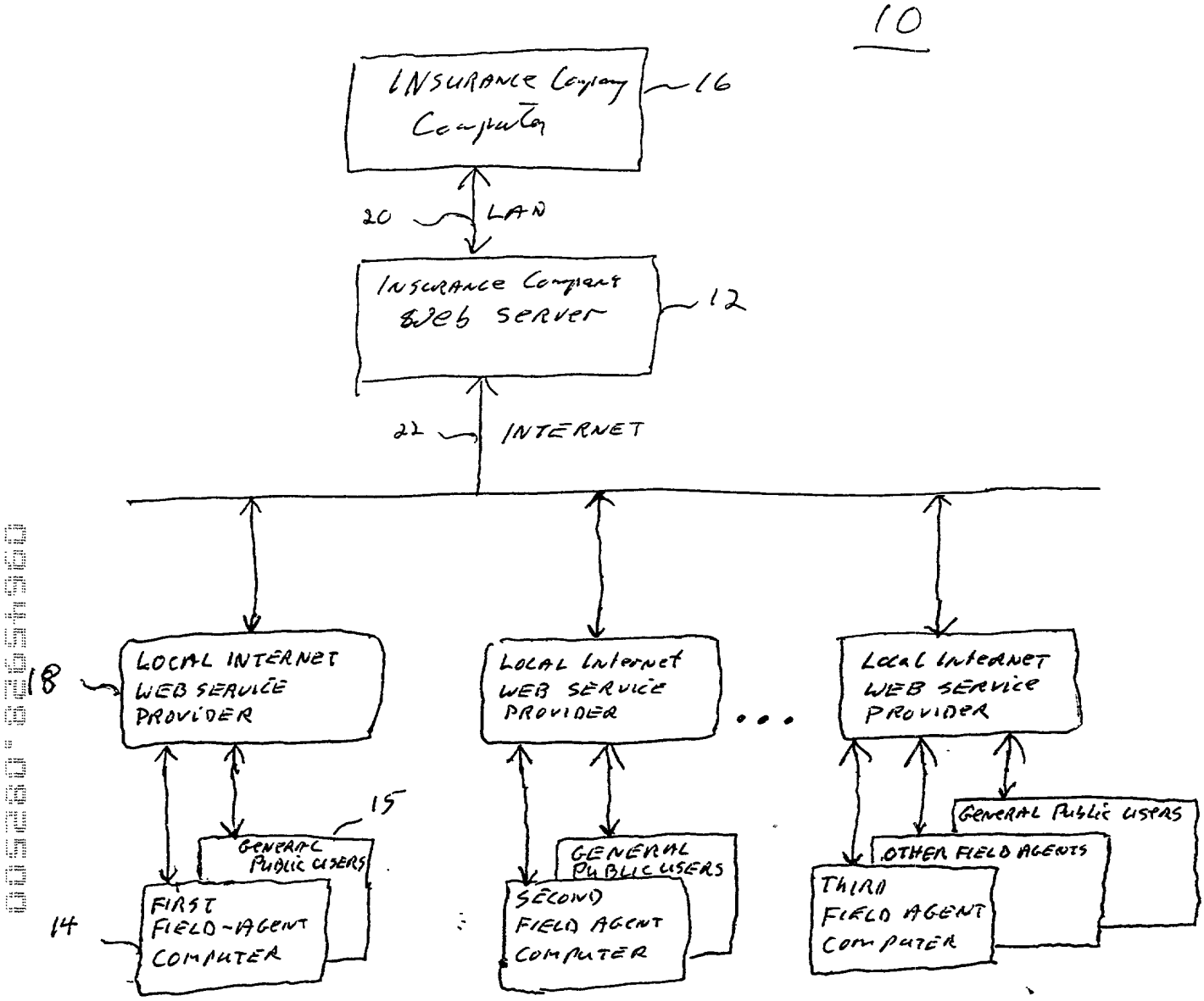
10
INSURANCE Company Computer
16
20
LAN
INSURANCE Company Web Server
12
22
INTERNET
LOCAL INTERNET WEB SERVICE PROVIDER
18
LOCAL INTERNET WEB SERVICE PROVIDER
LOCAL INTERNET WEB SERVICE PROVIDER
15
GENERAL PUBLIC USERS
GENERAL PUBLIC USERS
GENERAL PUBLIC USERS
OTHER FIELD AGENTS
14
FIRST FIELD-AGENT COMPUTER
SECOND FIELD AGENT COMPUTER
THIRD FIELD AGENT COMPUTER

FIG. 1

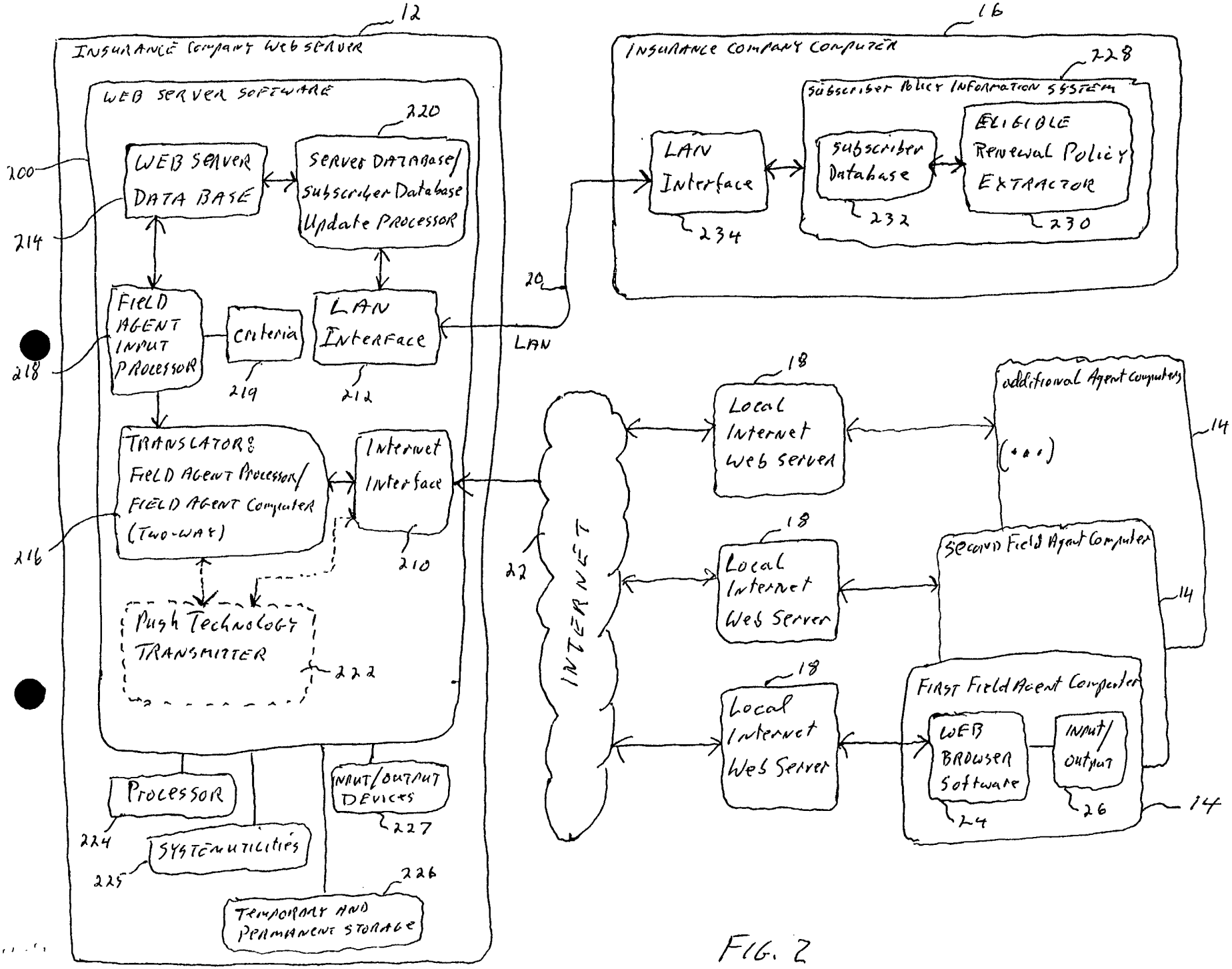

FIG. 2

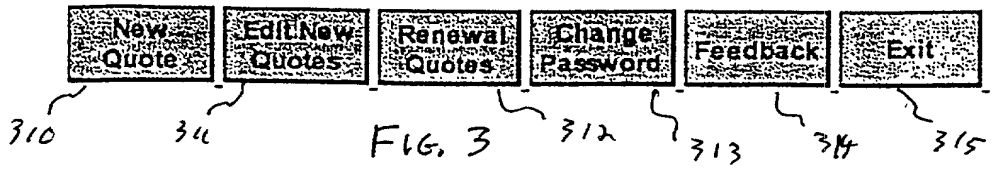

FIG. 3

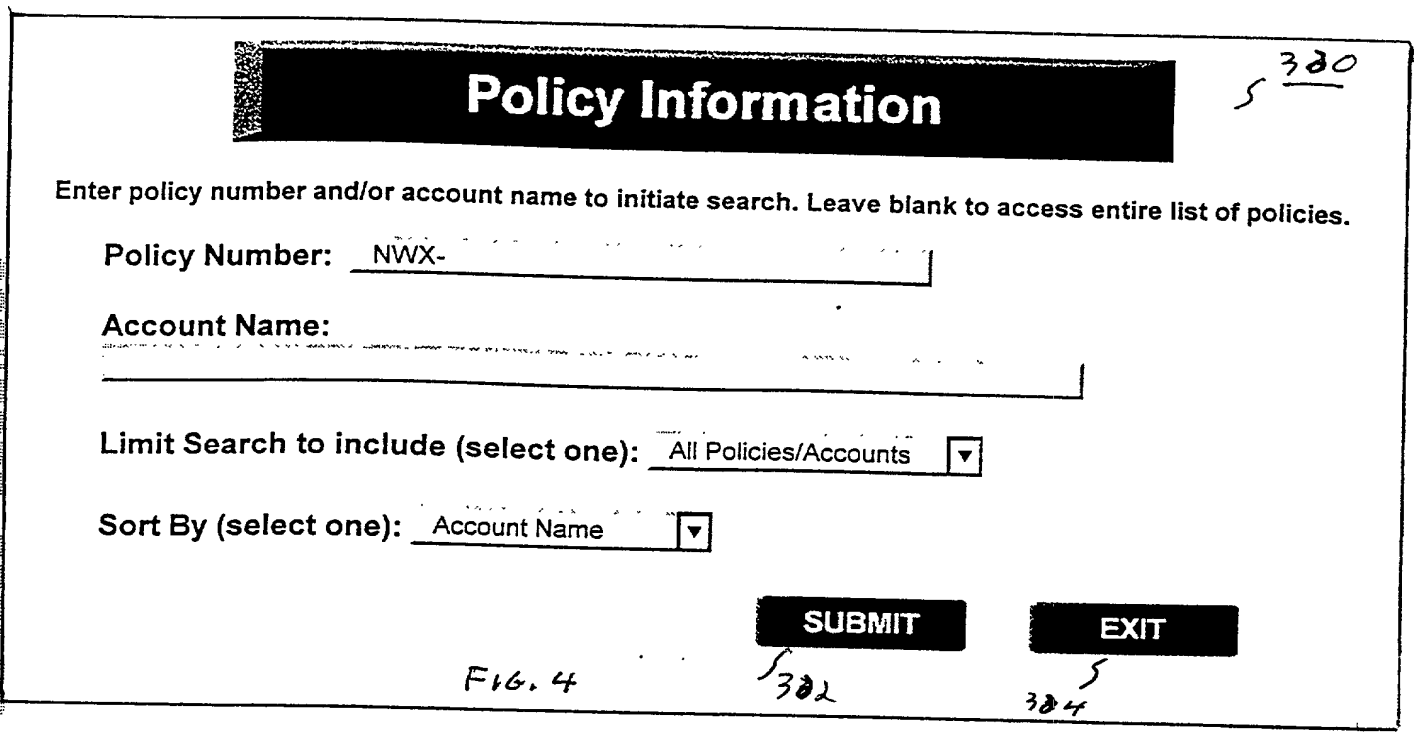

FIG. 4

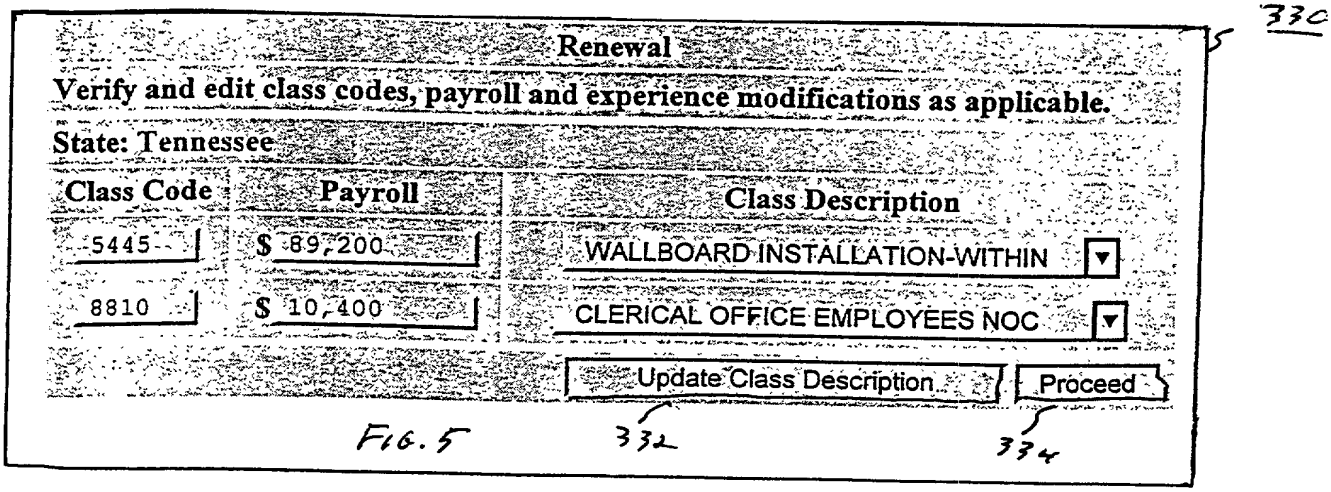

FIG. 5

340

Renewal

Your Governing Class Code is: 5445

Operations:

If any of the operations listed below apply to class code 5445, then select them from the list (If more than one item applies, hold <CTRL> and use the mouse to select multiple operations).	○ Yes ○ No
> 60% Residential	
Does the employer pay governing class (5445) employees an average in excess of $6 per hour?	○ Yes ○ No
Classification Footnotes/Special Rules:	
Minimum Premium $10,000 Loss Control Survey required after binding	
Does the employer financially contribute to a medical plan?	○ Yes ◉ No
Enter the Average Weekly Wage for 5445	$ 100
Does the employer have existing Experience Mods?	◉ Yes ○ No
If so, list two most recent Experience Mods in decimal format	1. 0.82
(List most recent first)	2. 0.82
	Check Eligibility

342

FIG. 6

350
5

Renewal

Based on the information provided, you have a schedule adjustment of 5%.

Your policy company has been determined to be Reliance National Insurance Company.

A deviation of -40.00% will be applied.

Next >> 352

FIG. 7

360
5

Renewal

General Information

Does the applicant own, operate or lease aircraft/watercraft?

Do/Have past, present or discontinued operations involve(d) storing, treating, discharging, applying, disposing, or transporting of hazardous materials? (e.g. landfills, wastes, fuel tanks, etc.)

Any work performed underground or above 15 feet?

Any work performed on barges, vessels, docks, bridge over water?

Any group transportation provided?

Is there any volunteer or donated labor?

Do you lease employees to or from other employers?

Is the answer to any of the above questions "Yes"? ○ Yes ◉ No

Proposed Effective Date	Proposed Expiration Date
11/03/1999	11/03/2000

Employer's Liability

Each Accident, Disease - Policy Limit, Disease - Each Employee
Employers liability limits over 1,000,000/1,000,000/1,000,000 are not available under the CyberComp program. — 100 - 500 - 100

Legal Entity Type: Corporation

If not in list, enter type here:

The quotation being requested should be considered an estimate and is subject to change based on inaccurate underwriting information received, changes in rates, experience modifications or any other items by jurisdictions which have control over such items. The policy is subject to audit and the payroll and underwriting information will be audited and the policy premium will be adjusted accordingly.

Quote not valid if any of the following apply: "A" Rated Classes, Aircraft Exposures, Federal Based Exposures (USL&H, FELA), Volunteers Without Charge, Agricultural Harvesting for Others, Chemical & Dyestuff Rating Plan, Employee Leasing, Temporary Agencies, Occupational Disease Exposure or if the quote is in violation of any individual class code premium adjustment footnotes.

Do Not Accept | Accept

362 364

Fig. 8

State	Class Code	Class Description	Premium Basis	Rate Per $100/Factor	Est. Annual Premium
TN	5445	WALLBOARD INSTALLATION-WITHIN BUILDINGS & DRIVERS	$489,200.00	7.78	$38,060.00
TN	8810	CLERICAL OFFICE EMPLOYEES NOC	$10,400.00	0.20	$21.00
		SubTotal			$38,081.00
TN	9898	EXPERIENCE MODIFICATION	$38,081.00	0.97	-$1,142.00
TN	9889	SCHEDULE DEBIT	$36,939.00	0.05	$1,847.00
		SubTotal			$705.00
TN	0063	PREMIUM DISCOUNT	$38,786.00	9.50	-$3,685.00
TN	0900	EXPENSE CONSTANT			$140.00
		SubTotal			-$3,545.00
		Total For State			$35,241.00
		Total For Policy			$35,241.00

Print Quick Quote | Bind

370

372 374

The above quotation should be considered an estimate and is subject to change based on inaccurate underwriting information received, changes in rates, experience modifications or any other items by jurisdictions which have control over such items. The policy is subject to audit and the payroll and underwriting information will be audited and the policy premium will be adjusted accordingly.

Quote not valid if any of the following apply: "A" Rated Classes, Aircraft Exposures, Federal Based Exposures (USL&H, FELA), Volunteers Without Charge, Agricultural Harvesting for Others, Chemical & Dyestuff Rating Plan, Employee Leasing, Temporary Agencies, Occupational Disease Exposure or if the quote is in violation of any individual class code premium adjustment footnotes.

Fig. 9

WORKERS COMPENSATION CONFIRMATION RENEWAL

380

PRODUCER INFORMATION

Agency Name	JACKSON GROUP
Agency Number	0281915

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Name	ABC DRYWALL, INC.
DBA Name	
Mailing Address	3781 MAIN ST.
NCCI ID #	440544253
Federal Employer ID #	621053171
Other Rating Bureau ID #	000000000

LOCATIONS

1	Name	ABC DRYWALL, INC	DBA Name				
	Address	3781 MAIN ST	City	MEMPHIS			
	County	memphis	State	TN	Zip	38118	
	Number of Employees	12					

POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Number	Proposed Effective Date	Proposed Expiration Date	Normal Anniversary Rating
NWX6001716@	11/03/1999	11/03/2000	

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY

$100,000.00	EACH ACCIDENT
$500,000.00	DISEASE-POLICY LIMIT
$100,000.00	DISEASE-EACH EMPLOYEE

State	Code	Class Description	Premium Basis	Rate Per $100/Factor	Est. Annual Premium
TN	5445	WALLBOARD INSTALLATION-WITHIN BUILDINGS & DRIVERS	$489,200.00	7.78	$38,060.00
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TN	0900	EXPENSE CONSTANT			$140.00
		SubTotal			-$3,545.00
		Total For State			$35,241.00
		Total For Policy			$35,241.00

Does the applicant own, operate or lease aircraft/watercraft?

Do/Have past, present or discontinued operations involve(d) storing, treating, discharging, applying, disposing, or transporting of hazardous material? (e.g. landfills, wastes, fuel tanks, etc.)

Any work performed underground or above 15 feet?

Any work performed on barges, vessels, docks, bridge over water?

Any group transportation provided?

Is there any volunteer or donated labor?

Do you lease employees to or from other employers?

I agree that the response to all of the above questions is No.

This policy has been bound as of the effective date shown. A check in the amount of the required deposit must be received no later than 2 days of the effective date or appropriate notice of cancellation for non-payment of premium will be mailed.

The above quotation should be considered an estimate and is subject to change based on inaccurate underwriting information received, changes in rates, experience modifications or any other items by jurisdictions which have control over such items. The policy is subject to audit and the payroll and underwriting information will be audited and the policy premium will be adjusted accordingly.

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APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE	PRODUCER'S SIGNATURE

Fig. 10

Docket: T2180-906495

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of	:	
Mark BENSON et al.	:	Group Art Unit:
Serial No.:	:	Examiner:
Filed: August 25, 2000	:	
For: Insurance Policy Renewal Method and System	:	

McLean, Virginia
August 25, 2000

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS AND
NOTICE OF FILING WITHOUT DECLARATION

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

The attached application is being filed on behalf of the inventors, Mark BENSON, John GOLDWATER, Dean WATTERS, George KOWALSKY and Michael HEALEY, without an executed Declaration under the provisions of 37 CFR §1.53(d)

A duly executed Declaration and Power of Attorney will be filed in due course after appropriate notification by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Please address all correspondence to the undersigned attorney, at the below-listed address.

Respectfully,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

By: _____
John C. Kerins
Reg. No. 32,421

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 500
McLean VA 22102
Telephone: (703) 610-8649